

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A binder comprising:

binding rings each including first and second binding ring halves having latching portions provided at ends thereof which engage one another in a closed state;

a holding member having a length that allows said binding rings to be arranged with a spacing therebetween; and

an operating member on a surface of which said first and second binding rings halves are anchored at bases thereof with spacing therebetween, and which is movably fixed to an inner side of said holding member such that the first and second binding rings halves are fixed to the holding member;

the operating member including a pair of operating pieces moving within the holding member in a longitudinal direction of the holding member, and a pivot-shaft portion arranged along abutting edges of said pair of operating pieces;

one of the bases of each of the first and second binding rings halves being fixed to one of said operating pieces and the other of the bases being fixed to the other operating piece;

~~the binder also including an opening/closing member that, for opening the binding rings, moves the operating pieces within the holding member in the longitudinal direction of the holding member, while rotating the pair of operating pieces around said pivot shaft portion in directions so as to open the binding rings~~ the holding member includes a bound article mounting portion and holding walls arranged longitudinally at edges of the bound article mounting portion, and the operating member and an opening/closing member are accommodated in a space defined by the holding walls and the bound article mounting portion;

the holding member includes through holes arranged so that each of the first and second binder ring halves loosely passes through a respective one of the through holes;

the opening/closing member is arranged within the space of the holding member so as to bias the pair of operating pieces in opposite directions along a length of the holding member, and so as to hold the pair of operating pieces in an inverse V shape arrangement such that the abutting edges of each of the pair of operating pieces are disposed in close proximity to an inner surface of the bound article mounting portion of the holding member;

when the latching portions of the first and second binding ring halves are engaged with each other, the pair of operating pieces are arranged so as to be spaced further from the inner surface of the bound article mounting portion than when the pair of operating pieces are held in the inverse V shape arrangement; and

when the latching portions of the first and second binding ring halves are disengaged by fingers of a user, the opening/closing member exerts a restoring force on the pair of operating pieces such the operating pieces are biased in the opposite directions and the first and second binding ring halves are separated from each other.

Claim 2 (original): The binder according to claim 1, wherein substantially cylindrical slide portions are provided along the abutting edge of one of said operating pieces at spaced intervals and cylindrical slide portions are disposed along the abutting edge of the other operating piece so as to be loosely fitted between said substantially cylindrical slide portions, a pivot shaft being arranged to pass through the substantially cylindrical slide portions.

Claim 3 (original): The binder according to claim 1, wherein the opening/closing member is provided in a gap defined between the substantially cylindrical slide portions of the operating pieces.

Claim 4 (original): The binder according to claim 1, wherein a gap is defined between the substantially cylindrical slide portions of the operating pieces so that the opening/closing member is provided in the gap; and

an inner end of the cylindrical slide portion of one of the operating pieces faces said gap, and, in opposition to the inner end, an inner end of the substantially cylindrical slide portion of the other operating piece faces said gap.

Claim 5 (original): The binder according to claim 1, wherein a first pivot shaft piece is disposed at the abutting edge of one of the operating pieces, a second pivot shaft piece is disposed at the abutting edge of the other operating piece to be overlapped with the first pivot shaft piece, and a pivot shaft is passed between said first and second pivot shaft pieces.

Claim 6 (original): The binder according to claim 1, wherein a gap is disposed at the abutting edges of the operating pieces so that the opening/closing member is provided in the gap, a gap-side inner end of one of the operating pieces faces the gap, and, in opposition to the gap-side inner end, a gap-side inner end of the other operating piece faces the gap.

Claim 7 (currently amended): The binder according to claim 1, wherein said opening/closing member includes an elastic member, and said elastic member is provided between a pair of operating pieces constituting said operating member for moving the pair of operating pieces in the opposite directions, respectively, and for elastically urging the pair of operating pieces in the directions to hold the first and second binding rings-ring halves in the opened or closed state.

Claim 8 (currently amended): The binder according to claim 12, wherein the opening/closing member includes an elastic member, the elastic member includes a coil

spring and the coil spring is wound around the pivot ~~shaft-portion~~ of the operating member, and arranged in contact with the substantially cylindrical slide portion of one of the operating pieces of the operating member and with the substantially cylindrical slide portion of the other operating piece such that one end of the coil spring presses one of the operating pieces of the operating member, and the other end pressing the other operating piece.

Claim 9 (currently amended): The binder according to claim 1, wherein the opening/closing member includes an elastic member, the elastic member includes a coil spring, and the coil spring is wound around the pivot ~~shaft-portion~~ and is arranged in contact with a gap-side inner end of one of the operating pieces and with a gap-side inner end of the other operating piece such that one end of the coil spring presses one of the operating pieces of the operating member, and the other end pressing the other operating piece.

Claim 10 (original): The binder according to claim 1, wherein the holding member is provided with a movement restricting portion on an inner surface of a holding wall inside of which the operating member is disposed, a latch of the opening/closing member extending towards the holding wall of the holding member is engaged with and held by a latching portion of the operating piece, while abutting against the movement restricting portion of the holding member, for restricting the movement in the holding member of the operating member disposed inside the holding member and of the opening/closing member for activating the operating member.

Claims 11 and 12 (canceled).